

The Religious Inquirer

AND GOSPEL ANCHOR.

Devoted to the Exposition, Defence and Promulgation of the Christian Religion.

'THOU BRINGEST CERTAIN STRANGE THINGS TO OUR EARS—WE WOULD KNOW, THEREFORE, WHAT THESE THINGS MEAN.'

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A SERMON,

UNREASONABLENESS OF THE DOCTRINE OF ENDLESS MISERY.

BY W. SKINNER.

'Yea and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right.' LUKE XII. 57.

The sentiment that God will punish a portion of his intelligent offspring without mercy and without end, has long and extensively prevailed in the christian world; and, indeed, at the present day, it is considered by many one of the fundamental and essential doctrines of the gospel. Such is the veneration in which this principle is held by many professing christians, that a denial of it is considered a denial of the scriptures; and any attempts to refute, or do it away from the minds of men, are looked on as so many attempts to sap the foundation of Christianity, and to overthrow the whole superstructure.

That this principle of doctrine should have found its way into the church, in company with the mass of other corruptions, which were introduced from the philosophy of the ancients, and the theology of the Pagans; and that it should have been retained as a constituent principle of Christianity during the continuance of the dark ages, is not at all surprising. But, that christians, in the present enlightened age of the world, should continue to adhere to it with such unyielding pertinacity, would be matter of real astonishment, were not one other circumstance taken into consideration. When the arm of civil power was extended for the protection of the church, and for the propagation of that religion which was established in the world in opposition to worldly power and wisdom, an unwarrantable degree of authority was conferred on the clergy who never could be accused of neglecting any means of increasing this authority, and rendering it permanent. For this purpose, the degrading principle, that, in the concerns of religion, reason should be wholly disregarded, and its clearest dictates rejected, was introduced, and strenuously urged upon the people at large.

Although, at the present day, but few can be

found, who will openly advocate and defend this principle in its full extent; yet the influence of it on the minds of many is plainly discoverable.—To what but this shall we attribute the repugnance which is so often seen, to reason on the subject of religion? When we urge the unreasonableness of some particular point or principle of doctrine, we are often met with the assertion that human reason is depraved,—that it is an unsafe guide, and we must be cautious how we use it, or yield ourselves to its influence. On all other subjects but religion, men are generally disposed to be reasonable beings; and the more important the subject, the more carefully and closely they will reason. But on this, the most important of all subjects which can engage the attention of rational beings; and one which requires the most full and dispassionate use of reason, there are many who seem resolved entirely to set it aside, and to disregard its plainest dictates. Some will even go so far as to attempt a justification of this course of conduct; and will introduce a train of arguments, and a variety of reasons to convince you that they are right in rejecting reason. Thus, to borrow the pertinent language of another, they will 'reason against reason, use reason against the use of reason, and offer a very good reason why reason is good for nothing.'

But while some reject the proper use of reason in the affairs of religion, there are others who run into the opposite extreme; and reject every thing which is not completely within the reach, or comprehension of their reason. This is a fruitful source of skepticism and infidelity, as will be more fully seen when I come to speak more particularly of the proper use and office of reason in the affairs of revelation and religion. There are many things above the perfect comprehension of reason; and yet we know they exist. We cannot tell in what manner inert and unconscious matter could be so organized as to constitute our own living and sensitive bodies;—how from it the beating heart and heaving lungs could be formed; or how it could be converted into that fluid which circulates with such rapidity and regularity through the whole human system. Yet of all this we are perfectly conscious; we know it is so; and we are satisfied beyond a rational doubt, of the existence of a great First Cause, sufficiently wise and powerful to produce all these effects.—In order therefore, to be consistent, the skeptic should either contend with some visionary philosophers, that there is no such thing as matter, or a material universe in existence; because his reason cannot point out the manner in which they exist; or else admit that God may make a revelation of an existence to man hereafter, and of circumstan-

ces attending that existence which are above the comprehensions of his reason.

In order that the subject may be clearly understood, let us inquire in the first place, what is reason? In answering this question, it will not, I presume, be considered improper to introduce the definition given of it by the learned Mr. Locke.—He says it is 'that faculty whereby man is supposed to be distinguished from beasts, and wherein it is evident he surpasses them.' Reason, in its operations is fourfold. 'The first and highest' degree of it 'is the discovering and finding out of truths; the second, the regular and methodical disposition of them; the third is, the perceiving their connexion; and the fourth, making a right conclusion' from them. The first and great object of reason is to discover truth. This it attempts to accomplish by a careful examination and comparison of things and principles which are known to exist,—by following causes to the various effects which they are capable of producing; or by searching out these causes, from the effects which obviously have been produced. In this manner, many important and useful truths are brought to light;—many of the operations and phenomena of nature are discovered and satisfactorily explained; and in this manner we are enabled to 'look through nature, up to nature's God.' But there is a point beyond which human reason cannot go; and although it teaches us that there must be an infinite First Cause of all things, yet it can tell us nothing of his purpose in giving us existence. There are other important and interesting questions which it cannot solve; whether we shall exist beyond the grave; and if so, what will be our constitutions in eternity, are inquiries beyond its reach. Hence, in order to answer these questions satisfactorily, revelation becomes indispensable. But how are we to satisfy ourselves that such a revelation has been given us? or admitting it has been given, how are we to ascertain the truths it contains, but by the aid of reason? In short, why are the Holy scriptures any more a revelation to man than the beasts of the field, if it be not on the ground that man is capable by his reason of understanding them?

We may now notice the connexion subsisting between reason and revelation; and also the proper office of reason in the concerns of religion. Revelation is addressed to reasonable beings; its principles and requirements are all reasonable; and it is only through the medium of reason, that we are convinced the scriptures contain a revelation from God to man. Hence, as the justly celebrated writer already mentioned observes, 'Reason is natural revelation; whereby the Eternal Father of light, and fountain of all knowledge,

communicates to mankind that portion of truth which he has laid within the reach of their natural faculties; revelation is natural reason enlarged by a new set of discoveries communicated by God immediately, which reason vouches the truth of, by the testimony and proofs it gives that they came from God. So that he who takes away reason, to make way for revelation, puts out the light of both: and does much the same, as if he would persuade a man to put out his eyes, the better to receive the light of an invisible star by a telescope.

Our senses are the inlets of all our knowledge. By them we discover the existence of objects without ourselves. But it is reason which arranges these objects with regularity in our minds, and perfects that which has only begun by the operations of sense. Hence everything which is placed by our bountiful Creator within the scope of human ability, is seized upon by the senses, and converted to useful purposes by the instrumentality of reason. There are some truths so plain and obvious, either to our powers of perception, or faculties of judgment, that we can no more doubt them than we can our own existence: and consequently we can never admit as true, any principle which contradicts, or denies them. Of this sort are those propositions which assert that no effect can exist without a cause adequate to its production—that no organization can exist without an organizer,—that there can be no law, either moral or physical without a lawgiver, and that no effect can possibly exceed its cause. From these clear and obvious principles we irresistibly infer the existence of a Supreme intelligent Being, who is the first cause of all things. And a proposition therefore, which denies the infinite wisdom, or the Almighty power of God, we must reject as untrue. We have also, in the profuse bounties of his providence, an equally convincing evidence of his infinite and impartial goodness; and consequently any thing which denies this must also be rejected. Admitting these propositions, reason will teach us, 1. That it is possible for him who constituted the mind of man to enlighten it by revelation. 2. That, as a revelation which points out an immortal existence to man beyond the grave will increase his happiness; and as God is infinitely good, it is consistent with his character, and therefore probable that he would make such revelation. 3. That such revelation, coming from him, cannot possibly contradict any principle which he has imparted to us as undeniable truth, through any other medium.

From what has been said, we are able to discover, not only the nature of human reason, but also its office in the affairs of revealed religion, or truth. But we should not infer from hence, that we are to reject every thing in revelation which does not come perfectly within the scope of reason. It has already been observed that there are many things which we know, or acknowledge to be true which are above the perfect comprehension of reason. The object of revelation, as has been shown, is to make new discoveries to the mind, which reason could not reach, but which it vouches for as true, by convincing us they are from God. If therefore, we were to reject every thing in revelation which our reason could not completely comprehend, it would become altogether useless,

and the end for which it was given to us, would be entirely subverted.

That man is capable of exercising his reason to advantage, and that it is his duty thus to exercise it, in the important concerns of religion, is obvious from the language of the text, as well as from others scriptures. Our Saviour calls on those he addresses to judge of themselves; 'what is right?' Now if we adopt the supposition that man is destitute of the natural or moral ability of judging correctly, we must consider our Lord as extremely arbitrary and unreasonable in his requirements; in fact, we must consider him as requiring contrary to his own instructions concerning the requisitions of God on his creatures. In the chapter from which our text is selected, Christ plainly teaches us that no more is required of us than we are able to perform; and that we shall be guilty in the sight of God in proportion to our neglect of known duties. 'That servant,' says he, 'which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes; for unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required.' God himself, by the prophet, calls on us in a plain and explicit manner to exercise our reason, and promises us great blessings in doing it. 'Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.'—But, I need not multiply quotations to prove the propriety and reasonableness of reasoning on this subject. I shall, therefore proceed directly to the main object of this discourse, which is to show, the unreasonableness of the doctrine of endless punishment.

In the discussion of the subject before us, there are certain principles which I shall assume as true, as they are admitted and urged by christians of all denominations. 1. That God has established a moral government in the world—2. That men are the subjects of this government; and 3. That as subjects, all men are accountable to him for their conduct. With these principles constantly in view, the sentiment that God will punish men for their disobedience and their sins is perfectly reasonable: it is in accordance with all our ideas of right and justice. The question then before us, is not whether it is reasonable, just and right for God to punish his disobedient children; but whether it is reasonable to suppose he will do it without mercy, and without end.

The only ground on which the advocates for the doctrine of endless punishment have heretofore attempted to support this principle from reason, is that of the infinity of sin. Sin, they say, is an infinite evil! and consequently deserves an infinite, or endless punishment. This sentiment is clearly expressed by the Westminster Assembly of divines, in the following question and answer, 'What does every sin deserve? Every Sin deserves God's wrath and curse, both in this life, and in that which is to come.' Now if the infinity of sin can be established as a truth, then I admit the doctrine of endless punishment would flow from it as a natural and reasonable consequence; but on the other hand, if this principle cannot be established; and if on the contrary it can be shown that sin is finite and limited in its

nature, all the support which the doctrine can derive from reason is at once taken away. Sin, it is acknowledged by all, is the act of a finite being; and as no one ever thought of attributing infinity to any other act of man, we might rationally conclude that this, as well as all his other acts was finite.—But such is the fondness of man for his own peculiar opinions, and such his anxiety to maintain them, that the clearest dictates of reason are often overlooked; and such I conceive to be the case in reference to the subject under consideration. Let us now examine the different grounds on which the advocates for the doctrine of the infinity of sin have attempted to support their systems.

1. Sin, it is contended, is infinite, because committed against an infinite God. The greater the being sinned against, and the more perfect the authority opposed by sin, the greater will be the crime. As therefore, God is infinite in all his perfections, and as his authority over man is also infinite, sin, being against this God, and in opposition to his authority, must consequently be infinite.—This argument certainly appears somewhat plausible at first view; but let us examine it—let us bring it to the test of reason and see if it be no more specious than solid. Suppose this principle were to be adopted in the jurisprudence of our country, or carried into practice in the government of families. What would be the consequences which would follow? Surely they would be such as to cause all the better feelings of the heart to revolt against them. In all civil government the authority delegated to rulers and magistrates by the constitution of the country, extends equally over all the subjects or citizens. But, I as are all these subjects or citizens alike guilty in the view of the law for opposing this authority? This will not be contended for by any man in a right mind. On the contrary, all governments, even the most despotic, make a wide difference in the criminality of the different individuals who may violate their laws: and while they will punish with death the man, who in the perfect exercise of reason, should deliberately commit murder; the idiot, or the insane person who should commit the same act, would be screened from all punishment. Now if the degree of criminality which is to be attached to the actions of mankind, is to be determined by the dignity of person or authority which is opposed by these actions, all such distinctions must forever cease; the idiot, or the insane man deserves just the same punishment for the same act, as the man who perfectly sane; and the infant a week old should be punished with the same severity for disobeying a parent, as the child of ten years. The truth is, the degree of criminality attached to every act is determined by the actor's knowledge of right and wrong, and by the amount of injury received by the person against whom the act is directed and not by the dignity or the authority of the person sinned against. This principle as I have already shown is recognized in all governments is adopted and put in practice in every family and were it to be overlooked, or a departure from it tolerated, the most unnatural and horrid consequences would be the result.

2. It has been argued that sin must be infinite

because it is the opposite of holiness. Holiness, it is said, is an infinite attribute of God; it is not capable of being divided into parts, sin is opposed to the holiness of God; not to any particular part as there are no parts, but to the entire and perfect holiness of God; therefore it must be as infinite as the holiness itself; and so evidently becomes at once, an infinite evil.

Without stopping to inquire whether holiness is strictly speaking, a single and distinct attribute of God: or whether it is not, on the other hand, a principle which attaches equality to all his attributes and perfections, which I am, for myself, satisfied is the fact; let us briefly examine the premises laid down, and the conclusion drawn from them. In order that the subject may be fully and clearly before us, I will take the liberty to lay down similar premises, and draw like conclusions from them. Wisdom and power are infinite at tributes of Deity, and are incapable of being divided into parts. Folly and weakness, being the opposites of wisdom and power, are opposed to these infinite attributes of God; not to particular parts of them, for there can be no such, but to the whole and entire wisdom and power of the Most High, therefore they must be as infinite as the wisdom and power themselves; and so, evidently become at once, infinite evils. Every one must readily discover the futility and impropriety of such reasoning as this; all must feel sensible of the absurdity of speaking of infinite weakness, or infinite folly; and yet by the same process of reasoning, which proves sin infinite, on the ground I am now examining, we must prove the infinity of folly and weakness.

But, I shall perhaps be met here with the assertion that weakness, and folly are mere negative qualities or principles, being nothing but a lack of power and wisdom. Let us then notice some other of the attributes of our heavenly Father.—Love, truth, knowledge, justice and mercy are also attributes belonging to him; the opposites of which are hatred, falsehood, ignorance, injustice and cruelty. Will any one contend that either of these, as they exist or operate in man is infinite? Certainly not; and yet there is the same reason for considering them in this light, as they are the opposites of the attributes of God, as there is on this ground for ascribing infinity to sin. But, says the opposer, the objection founded on the negative quality of weakness and folly, has not been removed, but rather strengthened by the remarks last made; as it will be contended that hatred, falsehood, ignorance, injustice and cruelty, are only the want of love, truth, knowledge, justice and mercy. Very well. Prove then that sin is any thing but the want of holiness; or cease to urge its infinity from the fact that it is the opposite of God's holiness.

3. The infinity of sin has been urged on the ground of its being the transgression of an infinite law. As 'sin is the transgression of the law' if it can be proved that the law which has been given to man for the government of his conduct, is an infinite law; then, I acknowledge the question is forever settled; and the infinity of sin must be admitted as an incontrovertible truth. On the contrary, if it can be clearly shown that the law which man violates by his transgression is finite, by a parity of reasoning it will follow conclusively that sin is also finite. But what are the argu-

ments brought in support of the position that the law of God which man violates by transgression is an infinite law? The only one which I have ever adduced on this point is, that this law proceeded from an infinite lawgiver. This argument, if it may be called an argument, by proving altogether too much, defeats itself. For if we contend that this law must necessarily be infinite, because it proceeded from God; then, in order to be consistent, we must admit that every being, and every thing which has proceeded from him is infinite; that we ourselves, as we owe our existence and every thing we have and are to him, are infinite beings; and not only ourselves, but every insect in the dust, yea, and every plant and shrub which springs from the earth is also infinite; which would amount very nearly to an infinite absurdity.

This is not the only, nor the greatest difficulty attendant on the supposition of the infinity of the law. We may rationally inquire if finite beings can be justly amenable to an infinite law?—Reason will at once answer this question in the negative. The law of God is a reasonable law; it is addressed to moral beings, who are supposed to be capable, not only of understanding, but of obeying its requirements. If then, this law be infinite, all its requirements must be infinite; and as all the faculties of man are finite and limited, it follows that these requirements are altogether above his faculties, either to understand or to obey. Where then would be the justice of the infliction of an infinite penalty on man, for not conforming to a law which is infinitely above his comprehension? Every rational person must at once discover the impropriety of this principle.—But, should it still be contended that this law is infinite, I would ask, can such a law be violated or broken? I acknowledge I am unable to form any clear views of an infinite law: but if any such law does or can exist, I conceive it must be that by which God governs the material universe, by which he guides the sun, the stars, and the planets in their regular orbits, and preserves eternal order and harmony throughout the immensity of his works. Now admitting this law could be violated, what would be the consequence? Original chaos, and eternal night would take the place of every thing fair and beautiful which we now see and admire in creation. Then would the

—earth unbalanced from her orbit fly,
Planets and suns rush lawless through the sky;
And ruling angels from their spheres be hurl'd
Being on being wreck'd, and world on world;
Heav'n's whole foundation to their centre nod,
And nature tremble to the throne of God.'

An infinite law would be equal to God himself, for he is no more than infinite; and it may well be questioned whether it is in the power of Jehovah to produce any principle equal to himself.—That 'the law of the Lord is perfect' is not only scriptural, but a rational principle. Its requirements are all perfectly adapted to the capacity and condition of all its subjects; and its penalties are all suited to their proper ends. But there is a wide difference between perfection and infinity; a principle or thing may perfect in its kind, a perfect love, or a perfect piece of machinery and yet fall very far short of infinity. Hence, we are ex-

horted to be 'perfect, even as our Father which is in heaven' is perfect; but no one would ever think we can become infinite.

4. There is one other ground on which the infinity of sin has been argued, viz. the infinity of the atonement. Had not sin been infinite, it is said, there could have been no necessity of an infinite sacrifice to atone for it. Here I would observe that the advocates for the doctrines of the trinity and infinite sin are guilty of a violation of the most plain and acknowledged rules of argumentation. They introduce two propositions both of which are assumed, and attempt to prove each one true by the other. If the infinity of sin be the point in dispute, the infinite sacrifice which has been made to atone for it is represented as an undeniable evidence of the correctness and truth of the position. On the other hand, in attempting to prove the essential divinity or Godhead of the Son, we are told it was absolutely necessary he should be truly God, as well as man; otherwise he could not have made that infinite sacrifice which was necessary to atone for sin.

But let us inquire, has an infinite atonement been made for sin? To this question I am sensible there are many who would, without the least doubt or hesitation, return an affirmative answer. This sentiment has long been taught and received as a principle of divine truth; it is plainly expressed in the language of some most eminent divines; and by none, perhaps, more clearly than by the learned and pious Dr. Watts. In his hymns, which have long been in use in most christian churches, we find these expressions 'When God, the mighty Maker died,' 'Behold! a God descends and dies;' 'groans of an expiring God;' and 'crucified my God;' with many others of the same import. Now admitting all which the most rigid trinitarian ever contended for—that Christ was the true and essential Deity,—the uncaused and eternal Jehovah; how, I ask, can the doctrine of an infinite sacrifice or atonement be substantiated? Could self-existence suffer and die? Can we admit that he who is the source and fountain of life, and 'who only hath immortality' could cease to exist? These questions must be answered in the affirmative, and they must be proved true, before the doctrine of an infinite atonement for sin can be established as truth. But in order to obviate this difficulty, we are told that our Saviour, although he was truly and essentially God, was also really and properly man,—that he had two distinct and separate natures, the divine and the human; and that it was the human, and not the divine nature, which suffered and died on the cross. Where then, is the idea of an infinite atonement in the death and sufferings of Christ? It has gone,—vanished like the mist before the beams of a midday sun. Many attempts, it is true, have been made in all ages since the introduction of the doctrine of the trinity into the Christian system, to explain this intricate subject; by alledging that in consequence of the intimate connexion of the divine and human natures in Christ, his human nature suffered in a much greater degree, and that these sufferings were far more valuable and meritorious in the sight of God, than would have been the case had it not been for this union of natures. But after all, as it cannot be admitted that the divine nature

in Christ, could be in the least degree, susceptible of suffering, these explanations have only served, either to perplex the mind, by filling it with a jargon of unintelligible mysteries; or to show more clearly the absurdity of the sentiment.

All this difficulty in understanding the doctrine of atonement would be removed at once, if people would but attend to the plain, simple language of the New Testament on this subject; where the word atonement is found once and once only.—The passage where it occurs is Rom. v. 11, and the apostle there says, 'And not only so, but we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.' He does not inform us that he and his believing brethren had received the virtues or the benefit of the atonement, but the atonement itself. In other passages, the same word in the original occurs, and is rendered reconciliation; and in every passage where it is found, it evidently refers to men, and not to God, as the party who receive it, or is affected by it. This is the plain scripture doctrine of atonement or reconciliation; and this atonement is what every true christian receives and enjoys by faith in his Redeemer. In the death of Christ, he beholds a wonderful display of God's unchanging love to perishing sinners; and 'through the blood of the everlasting covenant,' he becomes 'reconciled to God.'

I have now examined every ground on which the doctrine of infinite sin can possibly be maintained; and I think shown conclusively, that not one of them is tenable. But as this sentiment has been the principal argument in support of the reasonableness of endless punishment, it deserves some further attention. I will therefore proceed to offer some objections to the sentiment, which have not, as yet, been noticed. And,

1. If sin be infinite, all distinction in crimes, and all degrees of guilt, and criminality in sinners, are entirely done away. There can be no such thing as degrees, or parts of infinity; consequently the person who is guilty of one sin, is just as criminal as he who has committed ten thousand; and the man who should wrong his neighbor to the amount of one cent, deserves as great a punishment as the black assassin, who should enter his neighbor's dwelling at midnight, murder the unconscious slumbering inmates, and set fire to the house. In short, every son and daughter of humanity, who has committed even what we are accustomed to term the smallest crime, must sustain the character of an *infinite sinner*.

2. This sentiment denies that the sinner can ever be justly and adequately punished for his sins, or even for the smallest one of them. Infinite sin deserves infinite and endless punishment; and we are told the justice of God can never be satisfied till every sinner has received his deserts. But, can this punishment ever be inflicted? and can the justice of God, on this principle, ever be satisfied? No; for until eternity shall end, this punishment can never have been endured; and consequently, divine justice must, till then, remain unsatisfied.

3. It is a virtual denial of the final salvation of a single individual of the human family. All have sinned; and of course, according to this sentiment, as has been already shown, have become infinite sinners, and are under an infinite weight of guilt. Now, how can this guilt be removed? It will certainly require something superior to itself to remove it; and what can be greater? Not even God himself; for he is no more than infinite. It is in vain to talk about an infinite atonement, admitting such to have been made; for one infinite can never remove another, or counteract its operations.

4. Finally, it denies the infinity of God himself! It is an absolute contradiction in terms,

to say that more than one infinite principle can exist in the universe; especially if one be opposed to the other in its nature. If, therefore, we admit that sin is an infinite principle, we must forever abandon the idea that any other principle, or even God himself, is, or can be infinite.

You will now; my respected hearers, be able to judge for yourselves, whether it is our duty as rational beings, to receive as divine truth, a principle of doctrine so entirely destitute of all foundation, and which involves so many contradictions and absurdities as that of the infinity of sin. And if this principle be abandoned, as I think it must be by every candid person; and if we admit that sin is finite in its nature; it must appear unreasonable in the highest degree, to attach infinite effects or consequences to it. Reason, therefore, is most clearly against the doctrine of endless punishment, in this view of our subject for if we have arrived at correct conclusions respecting the nature of sin, we cannot reasonably believe a just God will inflict for it, a punishment so vastly disproportioned to its demerit.

Some distinguished orthodox divines of the present day appear to have become sensible of the impropriety of attempting any longer to support the doctrine of endless punishment on that of the infinity of sin; and have consequently abandoned this ground as untenable. They now teach that men will not be punished eternally for the sins of this life; but for those they will continue eternally to commit. This, it will be perceived, is entirely abandoning the principles of the early reformers; and even of that far famed assembly, whose confession of faith and catechism are considered the standard of faith in most orthodox churches. But how do they attempt to prove the endless continuance of sin? Do they appeal directly to the testimonies of divine inspiration? No; were they to do this, they would be met with express declarations to the contrary. They would then learn that, 'for this purpose the son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil;' and, 'to take away our sins;'—that he is the 'Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world;' that 'he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet;'—and surely, sin is an enemy; and finally, that death, the last enemy, the consequence and wages of sin, shall be destroyed. What then is the process of reasoning by which they attempt to establish this principle? It is by analogy. The sinner, say they, leaves this world unreconciled to God, and with all his sinful propensities with him; therefore, as he has sinned through this life, he will continue to sin eternally; and consequently eternally remain a subject of wrath.

Now as this is nothing but bare assertion, unaccompanied by the least evidence to support it, I might pass it by as such; and take no farther notice of it until it is proved true. But as this would be following a bad example, I will proceed to show that it is entirely groundless.

All the hopes we can have of an existence beyond the grave must rest altogether on the strength of scripture testimony. Neither reason nor philosophy were ever yet able to implant in the heart of man a hope which is 'full of immortality;' nor to assure him that if he died, he should live again. Neither can they teach us, admitting we are to live beyond the present state of existence, what bodies or constitutions we shall possess in an immortal state. What then, say the scriptures on this subject? The same passages which assure us he shall live again,

clearly point out to us what bodies we shall have in eternity. Paul, writing to his Corinthian brethren, when speaking of death, and the resurrection to life and immortality, says,—'It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.' It was not my intention, in the present discourse, to make much use of scripture testimony, as the design of it would not lead me to that course. But, as the position I am now examining rests merely on assertion, without any arguments to support it; it became necessary in this instance, to have recourse to scripture, in order to obtain data on which to found an argument. From the information which the language cited gives us of constitution of man in an immortal state, we at once discover, that in reasoning on what will be in a future existence, from what we know of the present, analogy entirely fails us. We can no more tell what the conduct of a man will be in eternity, from what we see of his conduct in this life, than we can tell what will be the motions of the butterfly, by observing the movements of the worm from which it is produced.

In this world, we have natural bodies, composed of the grosser elements of matter; in the world to come, we shall have spiritual bodies.—In this state of being, our bodies are corruptible; in the next, they will be incorruptible. Here, we are weak and comparatively helpless; there, this weakness will be succeeded by power sufficient for all purposes. Now, by reason of our fleshly lusts and passions, we are often led into such courses of life as render us dishonorable; then all our faculties will operate together in such a manner as to render us glorious. These are plain and natural deductions from the language of the apostle; and I now ask, is it reasonable to suppose with such constitutions, and in such a condition, that men will continue eternally to sin?

I have now, I believe, examined every ground on which the believers in endless punishment have ever attempted to support the idea of its reasonableness; there may be others, but if so, I am unacquainted with them. We have seen that the long cherished notion of the infinity of sin, is without foundation; and on bringing it to the test of reason, (and its advocates have never attempted to support it by the scriptures,) it has vanished like the 'baseless fabric of a vision.' The endless continuance of sin, in a spiritual and immortal constitution, has also been shown to be contrary to the clearest and plainest dictates of sound reason; and thus the whole foundation on which the reasonableness of this sentiment is, or can be predicated, is entirely gone,—it has crumbled into dust.

I might now, perhaps, with propriety dismiss the subject, having shown that the doctrine under consideration has no foundation in reason; but I wish to present one other view of it, in which its opposition to reason must be apparent to all who will allow themselves to exercise their reason upon it. Rewards and punishments, in order to be reasonable, must be apportioned to the merit or demerit of those who are their recipients. Now if an infinite and eternal distinction is to be made in the condition of mankind, in a future state of existence; and if this distinction is to be founded on the characters which the different individuals form and sustain in this life, does not reason clearly show that

this distinction is altogether disproportionate to the difference which exist in the characters of men in the world?

In order to illustrate the subject more fully, let us suppose virtue and vice, or righteousness and sin to be divided into one hundred degrees each; and that the dividing line in the characters of men is fifty. Between eternal life in the kingdom of heaven, and eternal condemnation in hell, in the common acceptation of the terms, there is the greatest imaginable, not to say infinite difference. Reason, therefore, will teach us, that a person, in order to be justly entitled to the kingdom of heaven, should possess the whole hundred degrees of virtue or righteousness: and on the other hand, for a person to be justly subjected to the endless suffering of hell, he should possess or be guilty of all the degrees of sin; or in other words, that he should be wholly sinful, without the least mixture of goodness in his whole character; and unless this distinction—this total difference in the characters and conduct of men does exist, that system which awards to human righteousness eternal life, and to the wickedness of men interminable wo, is manifestly inconsistent and unreasonable. But the difficulty does not end here; suppose a man to possess fifty one degrees of righteousness, and forty nine of sin; as he stands on the favorable side of the dividing line, he would according to the system under consideration be entitled to eternal life. How, or when is he to receive his punishment for his forty nine degrees of guilt? As it is denied that sin is punished in this life, is it not clear that he will escape the punishment which he justly deserves? on the other hand we may suppose a man possesses fifty one degrees of sinfulness, and forty one of righteousness, as he is on the unfavorable side of the line, he would of course be consigned to remediless wo. When will he receive the just reward for his righteousness?—And I would inquire further, how can it be said that God renders to these two individuals, or to either of them, according to their deeds?

But to this it will probably be answered, all men, while in a state of nature, and before experiencing the influence of divine grace on their hearts, are altogether sinful in the sight of God, destitute of all true righteousness or goodness; and consequently, God regards all their conduct as well as their character with disapprobation;—that the influence of this grace is such, as to effect a radical and entire change, not only in the outward conduct, but also in the affections of those who feel its operations; so that those who before this change were altogether sinful, and 'vessels of wrath fitted to destruction,' now become 'vessels of mercy,' prepared for eternal felicity. Now this again is an entire assumption of facts,—a bare assertion unaccompanied with any proof, either from revelation, reason, or experience. This sentiment is not only unfounded in scripture and reason, but it is directly contrary to what we see and know to be truth. Search among the children of men—go to those countries where the light of the gospel has never shone—where the name of the Savior was never heard—and you cannot find an individual who is entirely destitute of all goodness,—in whom none of those pure and amiable affections which God himself has implanted in the human heart, is never exercised. And O, tell me not these are all sinful in the sight of him who gave them,—tell me not that the affection, care and kindness

of parents for their children are unholy and sinful,—and tell me not that gratitude, love, and obedience of children to their parents are odious in the view of him who has commanded them; although they operate in the bosom of an unregenerate heathen. On the other hand, look at those who profess to have passed through this great and marvellous change, even those who have been truly regenerated by the influence of God's spirit; are any perfect in good works? Are there any who possess or exercise no unholy passions or propensities? No; not one. And is sin committed by a regenerate person less odious in the sight of God than if it were committed by one who had never enjoyed the light of divine truth? To suppose this, would be to reverse all our ideas of propriety; and to disregard the maxims and instructions of our Redeemer.

The truth is, in the human character there is every gradation and degree of virtue and vice.—from the most perfect christian, to the most abandoned wretch who disgraces humanity.—These degrees and gradations are very numerous, and consequently minute; and such is the nature of human actions—so various are the springs from which they flow, that it is often difficult to tell

'Where ends the virtue or begins the vice.'

As the man who should claim heaven and immortal felicity, for even the most perfect righteousness of which human nature is capable would be altogether more unreasonable in his demands than the laborer, who, for one day's services, should claim a rich estate; so it is equally unreasonable and absurd to suppose that a frail, finite mortal can deserve the pains of an endless hell, for the sins of this transitory life; or that a God of infinite justice and mercy will inflict these pains on his dependent children.

INQUIRER AND ANCHOR.

SATURDAY, JULY 4, 1835.

'DANGER OF BEING OVERWISE.'—This is the title of a sermon by William B. Sprague, D. D. delivered in the 2nd Presbyterian Church, Albany, and just issued from the press of Messrs. Packard & Van Benthuysen. The preacher takes for his text, Eccl. vii. 16 'Neither make thyself over wise: why should thou destroy thyself.'

The introduction treats of the difference between true wisdom and that worldly wisdom which erects itself against the truth, and the ordinances of God; and the body of the discourse is devoted to a consideration of some instances in which men make themselves over wise. Some of these instances are worthy of a passing notice. On pages 7 and 8 we read as follows.

'Take for instance, the scripture doctrine of the Trinity. The Bible has revealed with as much clearness, for aught we can see, as human language admits, the doctrine of a three-fold distinction of the divine nature. * * * * * But there are multitudes, as you know, who make themselves over-wise on this subject, rushing into gross absurdity on the one hand, or absolute unbelief on the other.'

The preacher then gives some strictures upon the manner of treating this doctrine, and condemns alike those that cannot understand it and those who at-

tempt to explain it. 'The one (he says) in their wisdom blot out the doctrine as an absurdity; the other in their wisdom receive it, but they strip it, in a great degree, of its awful mysteriousness and mighty power, and give it to us only in connexion with their own vain and conceited speculations.'

All this may perhaps pass well enough for powerful reasoning, before a limitarian congregation, but to us, all heretical as we are, it looks like downright sophistry. The prominent fault in the argument, is simply that the premises are begged. The whole argument is founded upon the supposition that the Bible teaches the doctrine of the Trinity, and this the preacher very modestly assumes for granted. Would it not have been as well for the argument if the Dr. had made an attempt, at least to prove this position? To be sure, he tells us that the doctrine is as clearly revealed as human language admits; but how are we to know that this is the fact? Must we take Dr. Sprague's word for it? Or must we read and see? We profess to have read our Bible, and it has been our lot also to read the presbyterian creeds, and we think it would not take much time to show that the 'awfully mysterious' doctrine of the Trinity, is somewhat more plainly taught in that creed, than in the Bible. We feel disposed to ask one short question, which we should like to have answered. If the doctrine of the Trinity is taught in the Bible 'with as much clearness as human language admits,' how happens it that every man who wishes to state that doctrine is obliged to use phrases not found in the Bible? Why did not the framers of the presbyterian creed state it in that language, and why does not Dr. Sprague just quote us a passage of that clear language instead of talking about 'Trinity' and 'three-fold distinctions,' terms which every school boy knows are not in the Bible? The Bible teaches that there is one God. It tells us plainly that 'The Lord our God is one Lord,' and according to our imperfect apprehension of things, those who depart from this simple truth to talk of the 'awfully mysterious' doctrine, of three in one and one in three, would be best fitted by the coat, made for those who are over-wise.

Passing over a few observations on the subject of divine and human agency in the work of salvation, on page 10 we read as follows.

'I will proceed to show you how the same spirit often discovers itself in reference to the institutions of God. You may see it in the manner in which men often treat the christian sabbath. God in his wisdom has ordained that one day in seven should be sacred to purposes of piety and devotion, and has commanded all men to hallow this day by religious observances, but men in their wisdom, practically, and sometimes speculatively decide that this institution is not necessary, and refuse to recognize its existence.'

There again, we find the learned Dr. begging his premises, and rearing an argument upon a foundation which he does not even attempt to support by a quotation from the Bible. There are a couple of things of which the preacher ought to have been mindful here.

1. He should have remembered that the sabbath was given to the Jews, and they were commanded to hallow it, but there is not in the good book any account of a day that has been hallowed and sanctified as a sabbath to the Gentiles.

2. The Doctor should have remembered, that the Jewish sabbath was the seventh and not the first day of the week. If, therefore he considers the com-

mand given to the Jews, as obligatory upon all men, why in the name of common sense, does he not obey it, or cease from complaining of others because they transgress. God commanded the Jews not merely to hallow one day in seven, but he told them *which* of the seven it should be. He said, in his wisdom the *seventh day* is the sabbath of the Lord, but Dr. Sprague in his wisdom thinks the *first* a little more convenient. Who is over-wise in this case? Let the physician heal himself. In the language of the Dr. himself I ask: 'what better is this than assuming to be wise above his Maker?'

The speaker on page 12th speaks of the subject of baptism, and regards those who reject the idea of infant baptism, as being over-wise. On this subject we will hand him over to our friend Dr. Welch of the Baptist Church from whom he will probably get justice. We only say that the ordinance of infant baptism is of questionable authority, and even Dr. Sprague himself does not attempt to support it by a plain thus saith the Lord. Hence if we were Baptists we think we should return the argument to the Dr. and, if the garment fits him, politely request him to wear it.

The last instance which the preacher takes, and the one upon which he labors most abundantly, is the manner in which men treat the sacrament of the supper.

It is known perhaps to many of our readers that some of the *ultra* temperance men in this portion of the Lord's heritage have gone so far as to exclude wine from the Lord's supper. This spirit of innovation, and high handed attempt to teach temperance to the master of assemblies and reform christianity itself is rebuked in a firm and manly strain of eloquence. The following paragraph is from the close of the sermon and is worthy of serious consideration.

'Brethren whatever you may think of the freedom of these remarks now I verily believe the day will come when every one of you will be satisfied that I have been pleading in behalf of the Temperance cause; for after all that I have said God's institutions *will* live, and whatever arrays itself against them will come to nought. I counsel you then *as friends of Temperance*, to beware how you ever seem to sanction this innovation; for, rely on it, God will not smile on any effort that goes to impugn his authority, though it be professedly made for the advancement of his honor, and even if it seem to succeed, it will be found ultimately, to have concealed in it the principle of self-destruction. Let the Temperance cause be kept upon its own proper ground, and within its own legitimate limits, and God's blessing will be in it, and the blessing of many ready to perish will come upon it, and new and ardent friends will cluster around it, and its triumphs will not only be gratefully celebrated on earth, but we may reasonably believe will swell the anthems of heaven. But let it attempt to rise on the ruins of God's institutions, and I forewarn you, that the days of its heaviness and mourning are at hand, and it will be well if we do not have occasion to go weeping to the grave where it is entombed, and in the bitterness of our spirits to ask concerning it, 'Can these dry bones live?'

If we had said thus much we should have been accused of being enemies to temperance; but coming from Dr. Sprague, we hope it may do much good.

I. D. W.

NATURAL DEPRAVITY.—The doctrine of total depravity, once a fundamental principle, in the creeds of those who assume to be orthodox, is of late becoming less important. Though it is believed by many, it is not held up to view so conspicuously as it has been heretofore. It is now contended that man is naturally depraved; though few have the hardihood, at this present day, to maintain, outright, that he is totally so. Innate depravity is supposed to be entailed upon mankind, and inherited from our first parents by all their posterity. To us however, this doctrine appears to be hardly susceptible of very plain proof. The natural propensity in men to commit sin appears to us to arise more from the nature of their moral powers, and the temptations by which they are surrounded, than from any circumstances involved in the transgression of Adam and Eve. It is not exactly scriptural that because the fathers have eaten sour grapes, therefore their children's teeth are set on edge. Moreover the transfer of iniquity from father to son involves a philosophical impossibility. Hence innate depravity, either total or partial cannot be true.

But a passage of scripture occurs to us which sets this matter in a very clear light. It is the injunction of Paul, (Rom. 12: 2) 'Be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable, and perfect will of God.' The reader may be at a loss to discover how this passage can be applied to disprove innate depravity; as it is a text that would be selected, as soon as any other, to show that the mind is depraved. A very little attention is required to discover its bearing. The injunction is 'be ye transformed, and transformed for the purpose of proving what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. A person thus transformed, of course, will be brought into the moral image of his Saviour—the image of love and holiness and goodness. He will be regenerated converted, justified, and made an heir of immortal glory and eternal life.

Be ye transformed. How?—by what process? By the *renewing* of your minds. To renew the mind—what does this mean? Plainly to make the mind new again, or bring it into the state in which it once existed. David speaks of having his youth renewed; and the language without doubt was made use of to express the feelings and vigor of youth, which were revived in him in his advanced years. And the prophet says, 'they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.' They shall possess again the strength they had before they turned away from the Lord. To renew them, is to make new, to revive or put in possession again the things which the individuals once possessed. To renew the mind in a scriptural sense, is to bring it back into the state or condition in which it once was—to put it in possession of that innocence and purity or total depravity which it once inherited. If the mind is totally depraved, then the renewing of it is to bring it back into that depraved condition. If on the other hand a renewal of the mind is its conformance to the moral image of Jesus Christ, then it could not have been naturally and originally depraved.

Our Savior says, 'except a man be converted and become as a little child he can in no wise enter into the kingdom of God.' This proceeds on the ground that man has committed sin. Hence the renewing of the mind is the matter of bringing it into the likeness of a little child—the likeness of its own self in infancy and childhood. If however the child is by nature either totally or partially depraved, the exhortation would not have been given to be transformed by the renewing of the mind.—But allowing the little child to be, as it actually is, possessed of innocence and purity, and free from depravity, the requirement is just. It follows then that the mind is not naturally depraved. Depravity whatever there may be in the mind of man is acquired.

The transformation by a renewal of mind was required, that man may prove, or distinguish the good and accept-

able and perfect will of God; or, as Dr. Clarke remarks, 'that they may have practical proof and experimental knowledge of the will of God.' This proof or knowledge can be acquired only by a conformance to that will.—Hence a renewal of mind supposes a forsaking of sin, and the exercise of holiness; and the mind therefore could not be depraved. It follows then, that the phrase renewing of your minds, taken in its just sense disproves the idea of innate depravity. R. O. W.

CONTROVERSY.—There is, perhaps, no more effectual method of eliciting truth than a well conducted controversy or disputation. Let two parties take opposite ground in the investigation of a subject, each conducting itself with meekness, charity and candor, desiring to ascertain the truth; and a question of a doubtful character would be very likely to receive a thorough examination in all its parts; and all its just and all its erroneous principles would be presented clearly to view. Each, having but one side to examine, would find all that is valuable on that side; and thus all that is valuable and true on both sides would be ascertained, and the mind would be prepared to judge correctly as to the merits of the question.

So fully assured are Universalists that the doctrine they have embraced, will stand the test of investigation, and come out like pure gold from the refiner's fire, that they are always willing and ever anxious to enter into amicable and candid controversy with any one who may feel inclined to oppose them. They desire it, not for the sake of conquest and victory, but for the development and promotion of truth and the pure principles of christianity. They do not wish to be abused, anathematized and condemned without a hearing. But if their opinions are wrong, they wish, in the spirit of love and christian charity to be shown their errors; and when convinced, they are ready to reject them. Fully assured, however, of the correctness of their own sentiments, they are desirous in meekness and kindness, of exposing the errors, they discover in the opinions of others, and of showing them that better hope and more expansive and salutary faith to which they themselves have attained. Hence a peaceable and amicable disputation is sought, for this purpose. When an opposer is willing to learn, or only converse with candor, though they may not hope to convince him, there is still a pleasure and profit in the controversy.—It assimilates the moral feelings and cultivates the charities and courtesies of life; and, though in opinion they may widely differ, yet, in the exercise of the christian spirit, they are drawn nearer together.

But there are other circumstances in which controversies are detrimental to the interests of truth. They are of no benefit when the question discussed embraces a subject of little or no importance in its bearing upon the morals and welfare of men. If brethren of the same common faith, who differ perhaps in some minor points, contend and dispute about this difference, the disputation is not apt to advance, but retard the interests of truth. If, for instance an individual member of any sect of christians, should express his own peculiar views relative to *baptism* or the supposed analogy in point of moral susceptibilities between the present and future existence of man, and these views do not unfavorably affect the motives of action and the great principle of human happiness—to make them the subject of controversy—may answer well enough for those who have nothing else to do,—but is not so well calculated to subserve the interests of our Redeemer's kingdom, as time spent in discussing subjects of more importance. We recollect reading somewhere even in our childhood

'That brother should not war with brother
And worry and devour each other.'

There are other circumstances under which controversy is a great dishonor and injury, not only to the cause of truth, but to those engaged in it—when a subject is dis-

cussed angrily by those who cannot, and will not reason. No one is informed or made wiser by such disputation.—On this point we copy the following remarks from the pen of a correspondent of the Christian Intelligencer, with which we have been both pleased and edified.

Our young preachers are apt to acquire 'a habit of disputing, owing to the peculiar situation in which they are placed—being singled out, as particular objects of sanctimonious castigation.—The pious ones of their acquaintance, thinking perhaps, on account of their youth, they can frighten them into obedience and peradventure, save a soul from destruction. They, 'always willing to give a reason of the hope that is in them,' naturally enough, attempt to reason these dictators into some kind of a tune consistent with that of a christian. But it is scarcely of any avail—indeed it very sensibly reminds one of 'casting pearls before swine' or sowing the good seed among thorns. Such people cannot hear a scriptural argument when arrayed against them, much less be made to feel its import, or be impressed with the evidence which it is designed to convey. Of this truth, I think my brethren will all bear me witness.

I remember me a time—it is no harm to tell a little story—some two or three years since, when I attended a meeting in the town of A—of the sect calling themselves 'Christians,' in company with our good Brother W—n. I did not arrive until after the preacher had named his text, when it was evident he changed his discourse—as it was somewhat irrelevant to the text—in order to notice a point of doctrine which I immediately recollected as a subject of serious disputation, a few days previous, between myself and one of his 'flock.' As it was most shamefully misrepresented by him, together with other sentiments, by me esteemed as sacred, I deemed it a serious duty, inasmuch as 'liberty' was given, to defend it—not for a moment doubting that, 'where the spirit of the Lord' was, there was 'liberty' for me as well as others. But it seems I labored under a mistake in this respect, as I had but just commenced when an elderly lady arose, 'to let the worst be known,' and I was compelled respectfully to desist.

After patiently awaiting the close of her remarks—which to me, seemed very like 'worshipping God for spite'—I again commenced, on the defensive, and had proceeded but a little way, when 'let us pray' said the preacher, and here was an end to—'liberty.' The goodly ones were dreadfully agitated, and gave utterance to divers hard things

—of horrible and awful

Which even to name would be unlawful.

This ungentlemanly treatment had the effect, not only to bid these 'solemn meetings' forever of my presence; but also to curtail, in some measure, my contesting propensities. It was waste of time, and throwing away words to no profit, to think of penetrating such impenetrable blindness—Rather, I think, should we 'beat our spears into pruning hooks,' and 'turn unto the Gentiles,' 'neither learn war any more.'

I am of opinion that the readiest method of effectually silencing an opponent is, 'to live a virtuous life'—then, though they may treat us like 'dogs,' they can have no 'evil thing to say of us.' And this I would have all mendo, when there would be no necessity of noting the faults of our neighbors, as I find myself obliged to do—but we should enjoy a cessation of those discordant principles, that have so long divided the race of Adam. 'My voice is still for peace, and though I find not the best method of promoting it, at all times, yet I think that much of its opposite might be avoided by refraining from unpleasant disputation. Should it be thought advisable however, 'to contend earnestly' on any occasion; it might be advantageous to study the mind of the adversary, to learn whether his principles be the result of malicious hatred, or, what is less criminal, of education.

In conversation with a person a few days since—a member of a church—he expressed his satisfaction at the goodness blended with the very ut-

terance of the great and precious promises' but averred that he was not well pleased with the 'ending' of it—i. e. the salvation of all men, which they so plainly intimate. Now this man passes for 'considerable' of a christian—and wishes doubtless, to be so understood—as he 'labors' for the 'salvation of sinners'—talks often of their 'carnal mind,' and 'wicked nature,' while he is totally ignorant of his own. Try to assure him of that for which he manifests so much concern—the salvation of the world—and behold, it is bad news. This man, probably, like another of my acquaintance, 'would not wish to go to heaven if every body else were going too.' It puts one in mind of the 'elder brother, in the parable, who was 'angry and would not go in, and proves their anxiety, manifested about sinners, to be only a hypocritical profession of godliness.—With such people it were useless to contend, without giving them to understand their iniquities; which causes a godly 'gnashing of teeth,' and brings about the results before enumerated. Now Brother Drew, you are at liberty to consult your own good judgment, respecting this brief communication—I have I believe spoken with freedom, but not with 'malice aforethought'; endeavoring to give a faithful representation of 'things seen,' and to preserve the truth, that men's affections will vary, as they differ in judgment; and what has been a source of contention, is pretty likely to become also, a source of enmity.

NOTICE.—Those friendly to the doctrine of the 'restitution of all things' in Durham and vicinity, are respectfully invited to meet at the central Academy in said town on Friday evening the 24th of July, for the purpose of forming a society of believers in the Abrahamic faith.

A lecture will be preached suited to the occasion.

NOTICE.—The friends of the Abrahamic faith of Burlington and vicinity are respectfully invited to meet at the centre of said town on July the 4th at 4 o'clock P. M., for the purpose of forming a Society—at which time it is expected there will be a lecture preached adapted to the occasion.

THE MERRIMACK RIVER ASSOCIATION, held its annual session at Mason Village N. H. on the 27th and 28th ult. Br. J. G. Adams was appointed Moderator and E. Trull Clerk. A 'goodly' number, both of preachers and hearers, assembled on the occasion. Societies in the limits of the Associations were—many of them—represented as somewhat inactive, and lukewarm. There is need of more energy, more zeal in the prosecution of the cause of our common Master. Delegates were appointed to the New Hampshire State Convention.

WINDHAM COUNTY ASSOCIATION.—The annual session of this body—formerly the Franklin Association was held at West Brattleboro Vt. on Wednesday and Thursday the 3d and 4th inst. The minutes of the proceedings we have not yet seen.

CONFERENCE AT HINGHAM, MASS.—A Universalist Conference was held at Hingham, Mass., on the 10th and 11th inst., at which it was deliberated, 1. Whether extempore preaching is better than reading written sermons; 2. Whether water baptism is a Christian ordinance; and 3. Whether it is expedient for a christian minister to engage in political matters. The Editor of the Trumpet does not inform us what decision was had on these subjects—suppose we guess.

1. It is better to write a sermon and commit it to memory, than to make it up in the desk or read it from the book. [As I do.] 2. Water baptism is as much a Christian ordinance as the eucharist. [No

answer at all.] And 3. By the Constitution of New-York it is wrong for idiots, negroes and clergymen to hold office, and consequently to electioneer for office. Some of our Eastern brethren who were present at that Conference, had better keep away from 'wicked York State.' But to the Conference.

Br. J. B. Dods was chosen Moderator—Br. A. A. Folsom, Clerk. The subjects were interesting enough to call out twenty preachers. Sermons were delivered by Brs. J. M. Spear, S. Streeter, E. Vose, H. Ballou and J. B. Dods. We do not see any notice that the Conference adjourned to meet again at some future day. Did they settle the business?

Mag. & Adv.

Br. Nathan Sawyer, of Medina, Orleans co. we are rejoiced to learn has commenced the work of the ministry of reconciliation, and has already preached in public several times to excellent acceptance. He has for some years been a professional gentleman of the law. We are right glad he prefers the Gospel to the Law. He is a brother of Rev. T. J. Sawyer of New York, and no doubt will do great good in proclaiming the gospel of a world's salvation, on the walls of our Zion. May the Lord prosper his undertaking.—*Id.*

REMOVALS.—Br. J. G. Burt has accepted an invitation to preach to the societies in Chelmsford and Westford, Mass.

Br. G. P. Leonard has accepted an invitation to settle in Nashua village (Dunstable,) N. H.

Br. Ammi Bond, jr. late of Carrol, Chautauque co. N. Y., has removed to Saybrook, Ashtabula county, Ohio.

We say a great deal, and we think we do a great deal; we would be wise above what is given, and work upon the works of God; but it is all nothing. Thy will be done! The Father is always overlooked. We look to him perhaps amid great trials and on great occasions; but not in smaller things. We say 'they are too little.' It is this in which we err. Can any thing that concerns his children, be too little for a father?—*Spurzheim.*

Religious Notices.

Br. J. Shrigley will preach at Poquonick on the 2nd Sunday in July; and at Suffield centre at 5 o'clock same day.

Br. W. A. Stickney will preach in Cheshire the first Sunday in July—and at Meriden at half past 5 o'clock same day.

Br. Shrigley will preach at Granby the first Sabbath in July, and at the stone school house near S. Gates' in East Hartland at 5 o'clock same day.—Subject (by request) from 1st Tim. 2-4.

Br. R. O. Williams will preach at Winsted on the first sabbath in July and at New Hartford at 5 o'clock same day, and at Barkhamstead on the 2d Sunday.

Br. W. A. Stickney will preach at Burlington on the 3d Sunday in July, and at New Hartford centre at 5 o'clock same day.

Br. J. Shrigley will preach in Chickopee Village (Springfield) on the third sabbath in July.

Br. C. Spear will preach in Hartford on the third Sunday in July.

Br. S. Davis will preach at Dry Brook on the third Sunday in July, and at Broad Brook at 5 o'clock same day.

Br. R. O. Williams will preach at Durham on Friday evening July 24th, and at Killingworth on the fourth Sunday inst.; and at Upper Middletown on Monday evening following.

Br. Williams will preach at Burlington centre on Saturday July 4th, at 4 o'clock P. M., at which time a Society will be formed.

Br. J. Shrigley will preach at Barkhamstead on the fourth Sunday in July.

POETRY.

HABAKKUK 3: 17.

Although the fig and olive fail,
And flock and herd from hill and dale;
Though Heaven withhold its wonted rain,
Or mildew blight the promised grain,
And meagre famine stalk abroad,
And war, with banner drenched in blood,
Spread havoc over hill and plain,
And pestilence—last in the train
Of evils—bear upon his wing
The death of every living thing;
Yet shall the Lord my songs employ,
And his salvation be my joy.

Though friends forsake in evil hour,
And leave me to the adverse power,
And human aid be all withdrawn;
One *Helper* will I lean upon;
The Lord shall still my songs employ,
And God my Saviour be my joy.

Though fell disease my frame assail,
And all the springs of life should fail,
And death—terrible death, should clasp
This body in his iron grasp;
My soul shall rise above alarms—
Rest in the everlasting arms
Of boundless love—triumphant songs employ,
And God, my Saviour, be my endless joy. D. H.

The goodness of God.

The divine goodness is infinite in its purity, depth richness. We are accustomed to speak of some men as good—as not only solicitous for the happiness of their fellow men, but as doing good, and according to the power God has given them, advancing that happiness in others which they desire for themselves. But all human goodness, however exalted it may be, is still *finite*.—The divine alone is *infinite*. With human goodness there is ever more or less imperfection. Low passions often mingle with our loftiest designs: the corrupting influences of selfishness creep in to mar our most generous purpose.—Petty rivalries, unworthy resentments and suspicions check the free current of our benevolence, and cool, and too often destroy, our love. Under the various influences to which we are exposed, friendship often falters and even the spirit of religion itself declines in our bosom.—But the goodness of God is *perfect*. It is pure above our highest thoughts. No evil mingles with it; in the divine mind there are no malignant passions that clamor for gratification.—There goodness appears conspicuous because it stands alone and unstained by the operation of a counteracting principle. We strive in vain to comprehend the richness of this divine attribute. Soar in thought, as we may, it is still above. Our most vivid conceptions of such goodness are poor and feeble.

The inspired writers seem to labor in vain for language to express their own deep feelings, their glorious views on this subject. They gather similes from the purest of all earthly affection and benevolence, and yet appear conscious that they but faintly shadow forth the perfection of the divine goodness and love.—Indeed, when we rise to the contemplation of this attribute in God our minds are lost in wonder, and admiration. It is then we see and feel that all human goodness is nothing—that it is not a drop in a bucket, nor a very small dust in the balance—indeed, that it is obscured and lost in comparison with that which is infinite and divine.

We think of those whom the world has united in calling good—the worthies of ancient and modern times, whose exalted virtue enable them to 'do and to bear' in the cause of suffering humanity. We think of their labors voluntarily undergone, of their trials nobly encountered of their sufferings endured without repining, for the welfare of mankind. We think of the milder but still more attractive virtues of some of the female sex—their deep, warm hearted, unquenchable love, a love that no adversity could destroy or weaken, but which seemed to gain strength in the very trials to which it was exposed and to cling the closer to its object for the tempest that was raging around it. We think of the patient and unrepining mother, whom no watchings can tire, but who bends like a guardian angel over the cradle of her suffering child, and ministers with such tenderness as none but mothers feel to its wants, and whose bosom thrills with an inexpressible joy when she sees it smile. We think, in short, of all the forms in which patriotism and love and benevolence have manifested themselves in the history of our race, and while our soul is kindling with an honest pride that we participate in a nature capable of such noble and generous action, we sink overwhelmed with astonishment when Christ with authoritative voice tells us that all this deserves not the name of goodness—and that in the wide universe 'there is none good but one, that is God.' O, the infinite goodness of God! Who can comprehend it? Who can sufficiently admire, adore it? It constitutes Jehovah's true greatness, his real glory. Compared with this, the martyr's spirit of devotion, the purest earthly friendship, even parental affection and kindness fade away into insignificance.

We know this is not the manner in which men have generally been taught to think and speak. We have been told that it is unsafe to compare the goodness of God—the love he bears to the human race, with parental love.—We acknowledge it unsafe, but only so, as parental love strong and enduring as it is, is still poor and weak and worthless in comparison with the goodness of our heavenly Father. Like a beautiful star in evening this parental love when contemplated alone; seems worthy and admirable, but when brought into the presence of infinite goodness or love, like that star surrounded with the glories of the risen sun, it vanishes and is seen no more.

Yet imperfect as the comparison is, the inspired writers have gladly seized upon it as one of the most forcible within their reach, to set forth that goodness which passeth all understanding. Listen to the following touching appeal of our Divine Master. 'What man is there of you whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good things to your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him.'

Remember, reader, in all your thoughts and all your words on this great subject that you are evil, and that God is the only good—that he consequently is as much better than you as heaven is higher than the earth.

Mess. & Uni.

Sickness.

There is something in sickness that breaks down the pride of manhood; that softens the heart, and brings it back to the feelings of infancy.

Who that has languished, even in advanced life, in sickness and despondency; who that has pined on a weary bed in the neglect and loneliness of a foreign land, but has thought on the mother 'that looked on his childhood,' that smoothed his pillow and administered to his helplessness? Oh! there is an enduring tenderness in the love of a mother to a son, that transcends all other affections of the heart. It is neither to be chilled by selfishness, nor daunted by danger, nor weakened by worthlessness, nor stifled by ingratitude. She will sacrifice every comfort to his convenience; she will surrender every pleasure to his enjoyment, she will glory in his fame, and exult in his prosperity;—and, if misfortune overtake him, he will be dearer to her from misfortune; and if disgrace settle upon his name, she will still love and cherish him in spite of his disgrace; and if all the world besides cast him off, she will be all the world to him.

Anecdote.

There took place in a country town what is called a *revival*. A great many people were convicted, not only in their own estimation, but in that of their neighbors.—Amongst other extravagancies, which are apt to take place on such an occasion many had got it into their heads that, in order to be saved a man must be willing to be damned. Amongst others who entertained this opinion, was a certain butcher, a noisy troublesome man, hated by all his acquaintance. After laboring for some time under sad conviction, he thought he had obtained to the requisite but difficult virtue of a true convert, viz a willingness to be damned in order to be saved.

Accordingly he went to the parson, and after talking over the severe trials he had to bring his mind to the essential point, he said he was confident he had now succeeded, and that he had as lief as not suffer damnation for the kingdom of God.

'Do you really think so?' asked the parson.

'Yes I do,' said the butcher.

'Well,' returned the parson coolly, 'I don't believe your neighbours would have any objection.'

Confine your tongue, lest it confine you.

Marriages.

In New York, on the 24th ult. by the Rev. T. J. Sawyer Mr. Easty Back, of Windsor, Vt. and Miss Maria T. Roberts, of Berlin Ct.

In Weathersfield, on the 15th inst. by Rev. M. H. Smith, Mr. Elisha Dodd jr. of the firm of Mann & Dodd, of this city, to Miss Fanny Bunce, of Weathersfield.

Deaths.

In Berlin, May 3d, Capt. Norman Winchel, aged 48; By this dispensation of Divine Providence, a wife is bereft of an affectionate husband, children of a kind and provident father, and society of a useful citizen. May the God of all grace and consolation bind up the broken heart, sanctify affliction to the afflicted, and continue his choicest blessings to all who mourn.

In this city, Mary, daughter of Mr. Charles Whiting, aged 6 years.

THE OFFICE of the Inquirer and Anchor is removed to the building formerly owned and occupied by Mr. N. Ruggles in Main St. a few rods south west of the State House square.